

No. 6

H. C. Constance

T H E

62

DUTY AND ADVANTAGE

O F

EARLY RISING.

LOVE NOT SLEEP, LEST THOU COME TO POVERTY.
SOLOMON.

'TIS BRAVE TO WAKE, LETHARGIC SOULS AMONG,
TO RISE, SURROUNDED BY A SINKING THROG.

By John Wesley M.A.

C A M B R I D G E,
PRINTED FOR THE EDITOR,
AND SOLD BY W. COWPER.

1673. e 6



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following sermon appeared about a year ago, in the Magazine published under the direction of Mr. John Wesley.

The editor on perusing it was so much struck with the force and propriety of the reasoning, as to be desirous it should be more known.

With this view it is now printed, with a small addition from Law's Serious Call, and two or three notes:

The editor only adds, that he hopes Mr. Wesley will excuse his re-printing the sermon without his knowledge, which he should not have presumed to have done, had he not conceived there would be great difficulty in finding Mr. Wesley, who, he heard, was on a journey; and had there not been some circumstances which rendered the present time peculiarly proper for such an undertaking.

June 20th, 1783.

E P H E S. V. 16.

REDEEMING THE TIME.

SEE that ye walk circumspectly, says the Apostle, in the preceding verse, not as fools, but as wise men: redeeming the time; saving all the time you can for the best purposes; buying up every fleeting moment out of the hands of sin and Satan, out of the hands of sloth, ease, pleasure, worldly business: the more diligently, because the present are evil days, days of the grossest ignorance, immorality, and prophaneness.

This seems to be the general meaning of the words. But I purpose at present to consider only one particular way of redeeming the time, namely, from sleep.

This appears to have been exceeding little considered, even by pious men. Many that have been eminently conscientious in other respects, have not been so in this. They seemed to think it an indifferent thing, whether they slept more or less, and never saw it in a true point of view, as an important branch of *Christian temperance*.

That we may have a more just conception hereof, I will endeavour to shew,

I. What it is to redeem the time from sleep.

II. The evil of not redeeming it. And

III. The most effectual manner of doing it.

I. And first, What is it to redeem the time from sleep? It is, in general, to take that measure of sleep every night which nature requires, and no more; that measure, which is the most conducive to the health and vigour both of the body and mind. But it is objected, "One measure will not suit all men: some require considerably more than others; neither will the same measure suffice even the same persons at one time as at another. When a person is sick, or weakened by preceding sickness, he certainly wants more of this natural restorative, than he did when in perfect health; and so he will, when his spirits and strength are exhausted by hard or long continued labour." All this is unquestionably true, and confirmed by a thousand experiments. Whoever, therefore, they are that have attempted to fix one measure of sleep for all persons, they did not understand the nature of the human body, so widely different in different persons. Bishop Taylor has assigned for the general standard only three hours in four and twenty. That good and sensible man, Mr. Baxter, supposes four hours in four and twenty will suffice for any man. But I am fully convinced, by an observation continued for more than fifty years, that whatever may be done by extraordinary persons, or in some extra-ordinary

ordinary cases, wherein persons have subsisted with very little sleep for some weeks or months, a human body can scarce continue in health and vigour, without six hours sleep in four and twenty. Sure I am, I never met with such an instance: I never found either man or woman that retained vigorous health for one year with a less quantity of sleep than this. And I have long observed, that women in general want a little more sleep than men; perhaps, because they are in general of a weaker habit of body. If, therefore, one might venture to name one standard, I am inclined to think this would come near the mark. If any one desires to know exactly what quantity of sleep his own situation requires, he may very easily make the experiment which I made *about sixty years ago*. I then waked every night about twelve or one, and lay awake for some time. I readily concluded that this arose from my laying in bed longer than nature required. To be satisfied, I procured an alarum, which waked me the next morning at seven, near an hour earlier than I rose the day before, yet I lay awake again at night. The second morning I rose at six; but, notwithstanding this, I lay awake the second night. The third morning I rose at five; but, nevertheless, I lay awake the third night. The fourth morning I rose at four (as by the grace of God I have done ever since) and I lay awake no more. And I do not now lay awake, taking the year round, a quarter of an hour together in a month. By the same experiment, rising earlier and earlier every morning, may any one find how much sleep he really wants.*

II. " But

* The following note from Doddridge's Family Expositor, is well worthy the attention of all, particularly of the studious:—

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II. " But why should one be at so much pains? What need is there of being so scrupulous? Why should we make ourselves so particular? What harm is there in doing as our neighbours do? Suppose in laying from ten to six or seven in summer, and till eight or nine in winter." If you would consider this question fairly, you will need a good deal of candour and impartiality; as what I am about to say will probably be new, different from any thing you ever heard in your life: different, perhaps, from the judgment, at least from the example of your parents, and your nearest relations; nay, and perhaps, of the most religious persons you ever were acquainted with. Lift up, therefore, your heart to the Spirit of Truth, and beg of him to shine upon it, that without respecting any man's person, you may see and follow the truth as it is in Jesus.

Do you really desire to know what harm there is in not redeeming all the time you can from sleep? Suppose in spending therein an hour a day more than nature requires? Why, first, it hurts your substance, it is throwing away six hours a week, which might turn to some temporal account. If you can do any work, you might earn something in that time were it ever so small; and you have

" I will here record an observation, which I have found of great use to myself, and to which I may say that the production of this work, and most of my other writings is owing, viz. That the difference between rising at five and at seven o'clock in the morning, for the space of 40 years, supposing a man to go to bed at the same hour at night, is nearly equivalent to the addition of ten years to a man's life, of which (supposing the two hours in question to be so spent) eight hours every day should be employed in study and devotion."

have no need to throw even this away. If you do not want it yourself, give it to them that do, you know some of them that are not far off. If you are of no trade, still you may employ the time so that it will bring money, or money's worth to yourself, or others.

The not redeeming all the time you can from sleep; the spending more time therein than your constitution necessarily requires, hurts your health. Nothing can be more certain than this, tho' it is not commonly observed. It is not commonly observed, because the evil steals on you by slow and imperceptible degrees. In this gradual, and almost insensible manner, it lays the foundation of many diseases: *It is the chief real, though unsuspected cause, of all nervous diseases in particular.*

Many enquiries have been made, why nervous disorders are so much more common among us than among our ancestors. Other causes may frequently concur, but the chief is, we lay longer in bed. Instead of rising at four, most of us who are not obliged to work for our bread, lay till seven, eight, or nine. We need enquire no farther: This sufficiently accounts for the large increase of these painful disorders. It may be observed, that most of these arise, not barely from sleeping too long, but even from what we imagine to be quite harmless, the laying too long in bed. By *soaking*, (as it is emphatically called) so long between warm sheets, the flesh is, as it were, parboiled, and becomes soft and flabby. The nerves, in the mean time are quite unstrung, and all the train of melancholy symptoms, faintness, tremors, lowness of spirits, so called, come on, till life itself is a burden.

burden.* One common effect of either sleeping too long, or laying too long in bed, is weakness of sight, particularly that weakness which is of the nervous kind. When I was young, my sight was remarkably weak. Why is it stronger now than it was forty years ago? I impute this principally to the blessing of God, who fits us for whatever he calls us to; but undoubtedly, the outward means which he has been pleased to bless, was, the rising early in the morning. A still greater objection to the not rising early; the not redeeming all the time we can from sleep, is, it hurts the soul as well as the body: It is a sin against God. And this indeed it must necessarily be on both the preceding accounts. For we cannot waste, or, which comes much to the same thing, not improve any part of our worldly substance, neither can we impair our own health without sinning against him. But this fashionable intemperance
does

* The infinite advantage of early rising in nervous disorders, has been lately experienced by a young person who had deeply felt their baneful influence. She was reduced to such extreme weakness as to require assistance in walking across a room; and imagining so enfeebled a state required a large portion of sleep, she generally lay eight or nine hours; but in the morning found herself as relaxed and fatigued as at night, and unable to dress without the relief of resting two or three times. Upon reading Mr. Wesley's sermon, she was so perfectly convinced of the propriety of his reasoning, as immediately to reduce the rules to practice, and by rising a quarter of an hour earlier every morning soon lessened the time of sleep to six hours; her strength gradually increased, and by persevering in this practice, together with cold bathing, and moderate exercise, those disorders, which had long baffled medical skill, wore off; and the person now, experimentally sensible of the great mental, and bodily advantage of early rising, deeply regrets the irreparable loss of so much time.

does also hurt the soul in a more direct manner. It sows the seeds of foolish and hurtful desires. It dangerously inflames our sensual appetites. It occasions, and continually increases, *sloth*, so often objected to the *English nation*. It opens the way, and prepares the soul for every other kind of intemperance. It occasions an universal softness and faintness of spirit, making us afraid of every little inconvenience, unwilling to deny ourselves any pleasure, or to take up and bear any cross.

And how then shall we be able, (without which we must drop into hell,) to take the kingdom of heaven by violence? It totally unfits us for enduring hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ: and, consequently for fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life.

In how beautiful a manner does that great man, Mr. Law, treat this important subject!† Part of his words I cannot but here subjoin, for the use of every sensible reader: “ I take it for granted, that every christian, who is in health, is up early in the morning. For it is much more reasonable to suppose a person is up early because he is a christian, than because he is a labourer, a tradesman, or a servant: We naturally conceive an abhorrence of a man that is in bed when he should be at his labour or in his shop. We cannot tell how to think any thing good of him who is such a slave to drowsiness as to neglect his business for it. Let this, therefore, teach us to conceive how odious we must appear
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† Serious Call, chap. 14th, at the beginning.

in the sight of heaven, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep and darkness, when we should be praising God ; and are such slaves to drowsiness as to neglect our devotions for it. Sleep is such a dull, stupid state of existence, that even amongst mere animals, we despise them most which are most drowsy. He therefore, that chuses to enlarge the slothful indolence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions, chuses the dullest refreshments of the body, before the noblest enjoyments of the soul. He chuses that state which is a reproach to mere animals, before that exercise which is the glory of angels."

" Besides, he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting, or any other act of self-denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer than he can perform these duties ; but he is no more disposed for the spirit of prayer than he is for fasting. For sleep thus indulged, gives a softness and idleness to all our tempers and makes us unable to relish any thing but what suits with an idle state of mind, as sleep does. So that a person who is a slave to this idleness, is in the same temper when he is up ; and every thing that is idle or sensual pleases him, and every thing that requires trouble or self denial is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise. It is not possible for an epicure to be truly devout ; he must renounce this habit of sensuality before he can relish the happiness of devotion. Now, he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt his soul as an epicure does. It is true, it does not disorder his life as notorious acts of intemperance do, but like any more moderate course of indulgence, it
silently

silently, and by smaller degrees wears away the spirit of religion, and sink the soul into dullness and sensuality. Self denial of all kinds is the very life and soul of piety, but he that hath not so much of it as to be able to be early at prayer, cannot think that he has taken up his cross and is following Christ. What conquest has he got over himself? What right hand has he cut off? What trials is he prepared for? What sacrifice is he ready to offer to God, who cannot be so cruel to himself, as to rise to prayer at such a time as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labour? Some people will not scruple to tell you, that they indulge themselves in sleep because they have nothing to do; and that if they had any business to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep: But they must be told that they mistake the matter: that they have a great deal of business to do; they have a hardened heart to change;* they have the whole spirit of religion to get; for surely he that thinks he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may surely be said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek. You must not, therefore, consider how small a crime it is to rise late; but how great a misery it is to want the spirit of religion, and to live in such softness and idleness, as makes you incapable of the fundamental duties of christianity. This is the right way of judging of the crime of wasting great part of your time in bed. You must not consider the thing barely in itself, but what

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* It is hoped none will conclude from this expression, that the power to change the heart is in man: If they do, let them but set about the work, and they will soon be constrained to cry to God, " Turn thou me, and I shall be turned."

it proceeds from; what virtues it shews to be wanting; what vices it naturally strengthens; for every habit of this kind discovers the state of the soul, and plainly shews the whole turn of your mind. If our blessed Lord used to pray early before day; if he spent whole nights in prayer; if the devout Anna was day and night in the temple; if the primitive christians, for several hundred years, besides their hours of prayer in the day time, met publicly in the churches at midnight to join in psalms and prayers, is it not certain that these practices shewed the state of their heart? Are they not so many plain proofs of the whole turn of their minds? And if you live in a contrary state, wasting great part of every day in sleep, thinking any time soon enough to be at your prayers, is it not equally certain, that this practice as much shews the state of your heart, and the whole turn of your mind? When you read the scriptures, you see a religion that is all *life*, and *spirit*, and *joy* in God; that supposes our souls risen from earthly desires, and bodily indulgences, to prepare for another body, another world, and other enjoyments. You see Christians are represented as temples of the Holy Ghost; as children of the day, as candidates for an eternal crown, as watchful virgins, that have their lamps always burning in expectation of the bridegroom. But, can he be thought to have this joy in God, this care of eternity, this watchful spirit, who has not zeal enough to rise to his prayers." If I was to desire you not to study the gratification of your palate, I would not insist upon the sin of wasting your money, though it is a great one; but I would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in
such

such a state of sensuality as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines of religion. For the same reason I do not insist much upon the sin of wasting your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I earnestly desire you to renounce the indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul, and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his apostles, and the spirit of all the saints and martyrs that have ever been among men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world. Here, therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice; we must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong. It is contrary to piety, not as accidental slips or mistakes in life are contrary to it, but in such a manner as an ill state of body is contrary to health.

On the other hand, if you were to rise early every morning, as an instance of self-denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would soon find the advantage. This method, though it seems but a small circumstance, might be a means of great piety. It would constantly keep it in your mind, that softness and idleness were the bane of religion. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and to renounce other pleasures and tempers, that war against the soul. And what is so planted and watered, will certainly have an

increase from God. 3dly, It now only remains to enquire in the third place how we may redeem the time? How we may proceed in this important affair? In what manner shall we most effectually practice this important branch of temperance? I advise all of you, who are thoroughly convinced of the unspeakable importance of it, not to suffer that conviction to die away, but instantly begin to act suitably to it. Only do not depend on your own strength, if you do, you will be utterly baffled. Be deeply sensible, that as you are not able to do any thing good of yourselves, so here, in particular, all your strength, all your resolution will avail nothing: Whoever trusts in himself will be confounded. I never found an exception. I never knew one who trusted in his own strength that could keep his resolution for a twelve-month.

I advise you 2dly, to cry to the strong for strength: Call upon him that hath all power in heaven and earth; and believe that he will answer the prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. As you cannot have too little confidence in yourself, so you cannot have too much in him. Then set out in faith and surely his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.

I advise you 3dly, Add to your faith prudence: use the most rational means to attain your purpose; particularly begin at the right end, otherwise you will lose your labour. If you desire to rise early, sleep early: secure this point at all events, in spite of the most dear and agreeable companions—in spite of their most earnest solicitations

citations—in spite of entreaties, railleries or reproaches, rigorously keep your hour. Rise up precisely at your time, and retire without ceremony. Keep your hour, notwithstanding pressing business; lay all things by till the morning; be it ever so great a cross, ever so great self-denial, keep your hour or all is over.

I advise you 4thly, Be steady. Keep your hour of rising without intermission; do not rise two mornings and lay in bed the third; but what is right to do once, do always. “But my head aches:” Do not regard that, it will soon be over. “But I am uncommonly drowsy, my eyes are quite heavy:” Then you must not parley, otherwise it is a lost case; but start up at *once*, and if your drowsiness does not go off, lie down for an hour or two after. But let nothing make a breach in this rule, rise and dress yourself at your hour. Perhaps you will say, “The advice is good, but it comes too late; I have made a breach already, I did rise constantly, and for a season nothing hindered me; but I gave way by little and little, and I have now left it off for a considerable time.” Then, in the name of God, begin again! begin to-morrow; or rather begin to-night, by going to bed early, in spite of either business or company. Begin with more self-diffidence than before, but with more confidence in God. Only follow these few rules, and God will give you the victory. In a little time the difficulty will be over; but the benefit will last for ever. If you say, “But I cannot do now as I did then, for I am not what I was; I have many disorders, my spirits are low, my hands shake, I am all relaxed.” I answer, all these are nervous symptoms;

symptoms ; and they all partly arise from your taking too much sleep ; nor is it probable they will ever be removed, unless you remove the cause. Therefore, on this very account (not only to punish yourself for your folly and unfaithfulness, but) in order to recover your health and strength, resume your early rising. You have no other way : you have nothing else to do : you have no other possible means of recovering, in any tolerable degree, your health both of body and mind. Do not murder yourself outright ; do not run on in the path that leads to the gates of death ! As I said before, so I say again, in the name of God this very day set out anew. True, it will be more difficult than it was at the beginning ; but bear the difficulty you have brought upon yourself, and it will not last long. The Sun of Righteousness will soon rise again, and will heal both your soul and your body. But do not imagine that this single point alone, rising early, will suffice to make you a Christian. No : although that single point, the not rising, may keep you a Heathen, void of the whole Christian spirit ; although that alone (especially if you had once conquered it) will keep you cold, formal, heartless, dead, and make it impossible for you to get one step forward in vital holiness : yet this *alone* will go but a little way to make you a real Christian. It is but one step out of many : but it is one ; and having taken this, go forward, go on to universal self-denial, to temperance in all things ; to a firm resolution of taking up daily every cross whereto you are called. Go on, in a full pursuit of all the mind that was in Christ, of inward, and then outward holiness :

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ness: so shall you be not almost, but altogether a
Christian: so shall you finish your course with joy:
you shall awake up after his likeness, and be sa-
tisfied.

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